

Henry 12.11.12

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SKYLARK ~~II~~ IV

1975

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1st place: Night Journey - Virginia Shreve

2nd place: a poem - Hoshang Merchant

2nd place: The Rebirth of Wonder - Bill Palmer

Honorable Mention: You can't saddle a dead indian - O.C. Upanti





a poem

*It is not the taste of suffering
it is not mere memory
of the soul of flight
and the window of the dead open wide
and of the dying shut —
nor the tide of blood
in the inner channel of the ear
It is not the stone made
statuary
or the statue made light
It is as if one sleeps long
in a rock garden Still
stumbles upon a pebble
that rings again in the rivers
of blood
air
light
as a single gesture
clearly cold
as a low bass note on a lonely night*

HOSHANG MERCHANT



WARREN ARNOLD

The Barefoot Feel of Summer

In the cold darkness of winter
I seem to feel
the warm winds of a summer night
gently stir my hair,
touch my cheek;
and my heart flutters
and remembers
the barefoot feel of summer.

As Artic winds and snow
blow upon brown grass,
I long for the touch;
bask in the memory,
of damp, cool grass
thick with growth
which swallows my barefeet
in warm sweet memories
of the barefoot feel of summer.

JOYCE SCHERER

DANDELION

Flower singing in green,
 flowing
 in
 yellow,
small thing

Blooming with the other
 weeds

Going to seed in cloud and rain

And only insects hear it

Breathing
 its moisture
 its sharp fragrance

Morning breaking to carry it on.

JANET GAWTHROP



WAYNE SAMARDZICH

the old man, the old woman
the old man
the old woman
rake the leaves
fallen, falling
from October trees
with twinkling eyes
and
smile

they rake the rusty leaves
in piles
the old man
bent and gathered
up
an armful of leaves
then tossed the harvest
upward to the trees

and all he achieves
is showering
him and her
with leaves
which is what
he meant to do
and laughs with fun
that he and she
are one

PARNELL BRENNAN



JOHN NIEMANN

NELLIE
(A character sketch)

With her plates in the warming oven, her hominy grits bubbling and spitting on the stove, and her fat biscuits browning in the oven, Nellie would pause in the middle of a spiritual to call us to breakfast. Her rich husky voice rolling out the words of the song was like warm molasses dripping from a near-empty bottle. Rounded and slowly rolled off her tongue, each word was savored and reluctantly let go.

Very religious, Nellie had a repertoire of spiritual songs for each morning of the week. Monday mornings always began with a joyful rendition of "Washed by the Blood"; but by Saturday, Nellie's sins were weighing her down, and the selection would be a mournful cry for deliverance. We children thought this was rather silly, for we were sure that Nellie had never done anything really wrong. How could she? She was with us constantly from the time we got up in the morning until we went to bed at night. The only day she didn't spend with us was Sunday, and then she went to church. No, if anybody went to Heaven, it was going to be our Nellie.

Nellie was a big woman. Nearly six feet tall and a yard wide, she was bigger than anyone we knew. Tucking one of us in the crook of each arm, she still had room for the third child to sit in the middle of her soft, warm lap while she told us tales about her childhood years and the job she had held as an adult. Fascinated with people and able to characterize them well, Nellie acquainted us with a variety of people through her anecdotes. We were very jealous of the children she had cared for before she came to us and were delighted when she'd tell a story about them that seemed to indicate that we were better children and that she loved us more. Nellie thought we were silly then and would tell us so. She always said that the more love you give, the more you have room for.

A jolly woman, Nellie laughed a lot, the sound geysering up and out like Old Faithful letting off steam; but she could also spew fire and wrath whenever anyone deserved it. Seldom did we three girls disobey Nellie. Having once been on the receiving end of her sharp tongue, we avoided it like the plague. One thing that was sure to cause Nellie to get angry was for anyone to "mess with" her girls. Whenever we were threatened in any way, she would begin to simmer, then boil, and finally erupt. Even Mother and Daddy deferred to her in matters concerning us.

Well over sixty, Nellie never seemed old. Everything she did was done with immense energy and was filled with her zest for living. Even washing dishes would become an event as Nellie sank her arms up to the elbows in the foamy suds and began to clatter and clang the dishes in a cacophony of sound intensified by her off-tune whistling of a popular song. Often she would have us banging a pan with a wooden spoon or knocking two small pieces of firewood together in what she called "making rhythm."

At least once a week, we would take long walks in the woods behind the house, and then Nellie was in her element. She taught us to creep up on small animals and birds without causing them to take flight, to know the plants that were good for making potions and the ones that were good for eating, and to find the trees that bore nuts. We invariably came back from our walks with armloads of goodies: buckets of plums, muscadines, strawberries, or blackberries; shocks of broomstraw; holly and evergreens for Christmas decorations; pocketfuls of hazelnuts, chestnuts, or walnuts; or buckeyes for good luck charms. The bounty depended on the time of year; but, as Nellie would point out, God always had something waiting in there for us and all we had to do was find it.

Nellie died when I was twelve. Stretching nearly a mile, the funeral cortege was composed of rich and poor, black and white. All were people coming to pay their last respects to a woman who, though she had never given birth to a child, was a mother to many.

Linda Knight Preston

A Crystal Bird

I like to look at it,
smooth touchstone to the palm,
rub my fingertips across it,
 (see if the frost might yield a secret.
It doesn't. But it tricks the eye into believing
so I try again;
 not even a fingerprint adheres.)

True to my habit of naming
I sometimes feather it —
 oriole, thrush, dove?
 one of a pair? always
 a bird of morning.
But there is always the suggestion of something more,
 something beyond a name,
 call it 'birdness' perhaps
 or essence?

What I really think
 is
 that somewhere
 a song too pure for the ear
 or the medium of air
 froze there,
 not to be caught in a question.

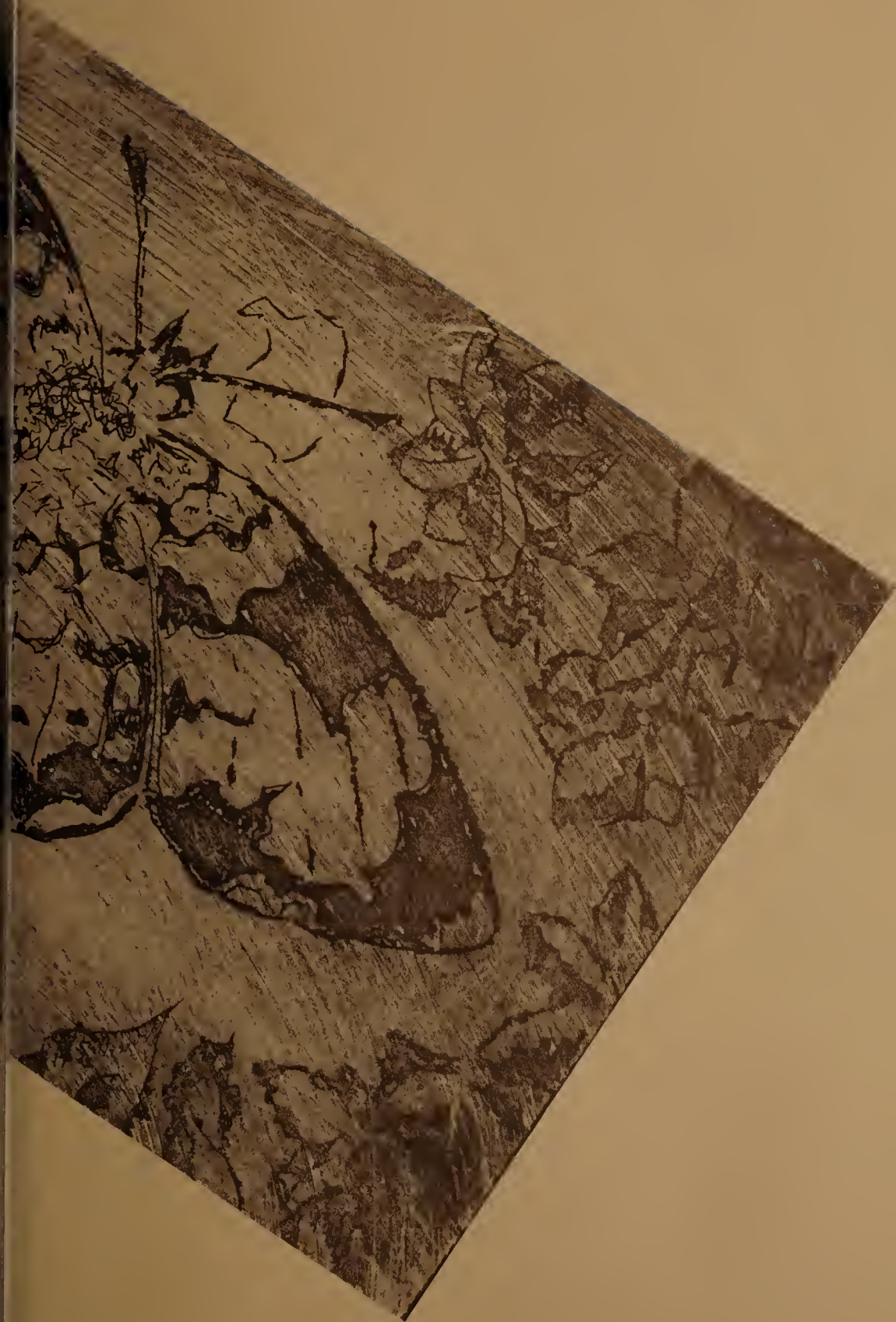
I finger it once more;
 return it to its post
 under an alabaster mushroom,
 my frozen dreams,

But I dream still:
 It sings. It sings.

LARA MANNING

ROBERT GALLIEN





A Sensation

Leaves
 falling, destined
 to
 the
 ground,

The green
That's orange
now red and brown.

Coolness, briskly,
 wind lapping the world

Time is passing,
 as each leaf
 does
 swirl.

Amber, glowing amber,
 fills the field
 and home and heart.

(And you have a yearning, a sensation,
 to step in
 and take part)

Take a part
 in
 God's work
 for
 the
 beauty
 of
 it
 all

Yet it's such a great
 elation

To just watch and love the fall.

KAREN ECKENRODE



JOHN NIEMANN

AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM

Where the village was
Is still now.
Nothing but wind
Edges on
The stubble of grass,
The little flowers
Poked yellow and blue
Through wasted field:
I do not hear
The anger,
The brutal laughter
Of the people
Sitting beside
Good samovar
And the warmth
Of stove.
I do not hear
The singer
In the tavern
Telling
In a last lost
Moment of joy
His long, long
Loneliness, his
Tea and dark bread.
Before dark comes
I only remember the fire,
The bird-stutter
Of machine gun.

DAVID KUPRIN



THE DOOR

Sitting at the table, they realize how “alone” together can be. Alone because there has never yet been a right time for children or settling down. They realize that they are both well through their fourth decade. It makes them know that there is no right time for anything in this life. Only those people who take a chance on doing something when the time is not right can be satisfied with the time they put in on earth.

All their waiting has led them to this ancient shack. Driven financially from the flat where they waited for the right time to buy a house, they reached out for whatever would shelter them while they tried to speed up the waiting process. So much of life was gone already; they knew they needed a shortcut. However, they retain the spirit that drove them to make the best of their youth—to use it as only the young can.

Paint is just a memory on this shack, as is the young, energetic man who built it lifetimes ago. It remains as proof that he did exist and dream. But to this couple it appears as less a dream than a nightmare. Since they are adventurous enough to see this living arrangement as temporary, being in a place worse off than they are helps them ignore the very situation that brought them here. Facing the people of “now” brings them harshly back to their problem.

“I don’t understand how things can keep going this way,” he protests. “Everyone deserves his share of bad luck, but we can’t seem to shake this streak. I’m beginning to believe in jinxes. People slam their doors in my face before I’m even up the walk.”

“We’ve stuck it out—we’re probably almost through this mess.” (Part of what keeps them together is the way one’s mood can stay high when the other’s sinks low.) “Finding this old place is a good defensive move. Since we’ve been here we don’t have much, but you can’t lose what you don’t have. We won’t let a dumb thing like ‘luck’ defeat us.”

You’re right. I can feel things have got to start going right for us. Especially since we’ve been here. Something is waiting for me—something that’s going to take us straight up. If only I knew how to start or which direction to go. Don’t worry, Hon. I’ll break through somehow.”

Sparsely furnished, the main room of the shack serves as cooking, eating and living headquarters. The few furnishings that remain appear to be original. There is only one entrance and few windows—probably in an effort to conserve natural body heat in a time before Mr. Edison’s comforts were so readily available. However at the back of the shack is a door that apparently leads to another room. Now that the ritual of moving in is over, he becomes more curious about this door.

“I still can’t get this door open,” he says. “It doesn’t seem to be warped, but it doesn’t budge. I’d swear that there was a steel plate on the other side holding it to the wall. But that’s impossible since there’s no way in or out of there but this door.”

While pouring him a cup of her campfire-style coffee, she says, “Don’t worry about it! It’s probably just a little pantry or something. We’ve plenty of room for us, and nothing to put in there if we do get it open.”

“But doesn’t it drive you crazy? This is our home, and as long as that door is stuck, it’s not completely ours. We’re almost like Adam and Eve being told they could only use part of the Garden of Eden.”

“Remember the trouble Adam and Eve got into. We won’t be in this house much longer if we don’t get some money. Tomorrow we’ve both got to get out and find something.”

“You try if you want. This is such a small town; if there was nothing for us to do last week, there’ll be nothing for us next week, or the week after that. It’s hopeless. We can’t get out of this place without cash to get us there . . .”

“Yeah, and we can’t stay here much longer without it.”

He spends most of the day pacing. As his tension increases, so does his tempo. "We've got to get to the room. That feeling . . . it must have something to do with the room. If I could find out what's in there, I bet somehow it would mean a new start—a new life—for us."

He rams himself against the door. All that shakes is the frame.

* * *

Each day that passes intensifies his obsession with the door. Even his wife, his complement, is frustrated and depressed by the change in him. Finally there are no words left. He has no interest in any kind of future they might have together. He can only see as far as the door.

She sees she has got to get him out of this place. Does a woman always start nagging out of love?

"The man from the farm over the hill was here. He says two of his farmhands are down with flue and he can use you for at least a week. I said you would be glad for a week's work. He's expecting you sometime today."

"I don't need 'a week' from anybody! Not now—not when I'm this close. Don't you understand? Everyone has only so many opportunities to make it. Most people are so busy plodding through a week at a time they don't see their opportunity when it's on top of them. Once you miss your chance, you can't go back and reclaim it. Fate doesn't work that way."

"Now forget farms and farmers and this whole damn town. What I need is right here . . . that door! And when I get it, it'll be the chance that takes me straight out of here."

She goes to the table where she slumps down, defeated. She realizes her man has lost all perspective on reality.

* * *

Later that night they are still at the table. She is deep in depression at seeing her life come to a standstill. He is near exhaustion from trying to work open the door. The swell of energy which came at the peak of his excitement is now fading like helium leaks from a child's balloon. As General Custer must have tried to gather his already defeated troops in another suicidal attack against the Indians, this man's brain tries to recruit his limbs to push open the door.

What is on the other side? Through some freak of nature, one of Mother's little practical jokes, this door leads to nowhere. It's the dividing line between two planes of time taking up the same space on earth. On the other side is a man; a man who is sure he has come upon his one chance in life to "make it." As he struggles to push against the door, his wife looks on in sorrow . . .

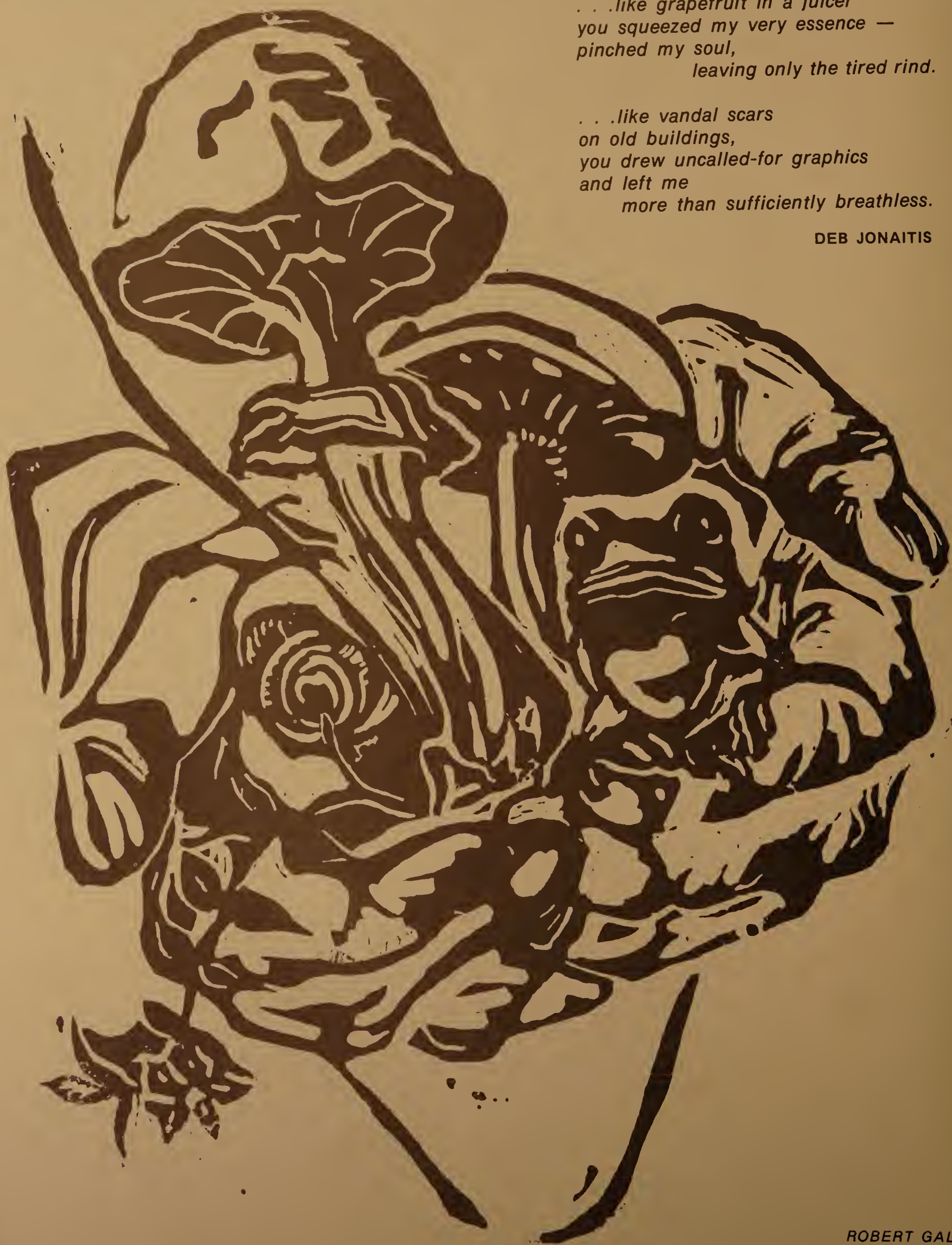
Margaret Sheiman

You smeared my mind

*. . .like grapefruit in a juicer
you squeezed my very essence —
pinched my soul,
leaving only the tired rind.*

*. . .like vandal scars
on old buildings,
you drew uncalled-for graphics
and left me
more than sufficiently breathless.*

DEB JONAITIS



ROBERT GALLIEN

NIGHT JOURNEY

*The hours of the night pass like cats.
Each night is a test.
I watch the clock and wait for dawn.
My life gripped like a rough rope
In my hands,
I sit in the corner taking my pulse.
Outside, branches weave webs entangling my thoughts.
In summer it was the brittle scraping of crickets;
Now it is the silence that follows me
Hollow-eyed through the dark.
I cannot bear to hear the dead names.*

*Twenty-one years stacked in orderly rows
Like nice smooth white stones.
Clean, faceless, and polite.
The blank moon is a hole
Through which my life is seeping;
Dawn, a memory that fades
With the pulse of night's own dark heart.
The only escape is pursuit.
The glass face of the clock glitters
In jagged fragments on the floor
Where I broke it
Mouths blooming out of stone,
Unsealing this envelope of flesh.
Scarlet bracelets drop like petals
Or like cats leaping from a fence.*

VIRGINIA SHREVE

YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL

*Magic city paradise
The two of you
Mesmerized by metallic
Monster skyscrapers, plastic robots
Your head's in a cloud
You sense her presence, but
She's minor in your fantasies.*

*Walking through busy avenues
You're happy.
Her love is your possession.
Her existence your creation.
How could failure attempt to
Touch your golden pedestal?*

*People stare—you're their picture.
Fancy clothes, peacock feathers,
Suave manner. You have it all.
Along with crystal mirrored shields,
To shelter your precious jeweled mind,
Your eggshell heart.*

*Big city blues. Icy gazes.
Things you ne'er noticed.
Why now?
Could she have meant so much?
Is your soul actually empty?
Of course not!
Idols never fall; and
Love—how can it hurt?*

GAIL ELIZABETH ANDERSON

FEBRUARY

That clay pot

Of red tulips

In the corner

Of the florist shop

Says more

Than I understand.

GARY CZERWINSKI





WAYNE SAMARDZICH

MEMORIES

*Victims of lifetimes,
Prisoners of time,
Locked in the confines of pages of mine.*

*Crumpled and darkened, faded with age,
Only traces of fragrant memories remain.*

*Peaceful, happy memories vivid still in my mind
Ribbons dangle; petals crushed, stems bent from shape
Never these shall be mended by time or love but,*

*They're forever being
forever mine
Locked in endless pages of time.*

PENNY BORTZ



WARREN ARNOLD

VOICE OF AN ANGEL

Seems like everybody got asked
what did they think of creation?
Everybody but some of us
that were around first and
knew all about that devil
Satan and the
mess he got into.

I was off on one of the
boss's usual wild goose chases,
checking out stars, when the
big battle came off.

So the boss couldn't
throw me in hell with Satan
just because I might
have agreed with him.

Anyway, right after, the
boss got kind of moody and
depressed. So, to get
his mind off his problems,
he started playing around
with his hobby, which was
building things.

First thing we knew,
there was this big ball
hanging outside our front door.

Boy, did he get carried away
that time. He hung
balls here and balls there and
threw in some leftover stars,
just for good measure.

We just mostly watched because
we knew, sure as shootin', when
he got tired of the whole thing,
he'd probably tell us to
take care of it.

Not that you could ever **do**
anything with his toys when he
got tired of them.
Either he made 'em so they
always did the same thing or
else they did crazy things like
shooting out of their spot and
tearing up the sky or just
plain blowing up.

Anyway, the boss made this guy
Adam, out of dust, of all things.
How could he expect dust to
amount to much?

He made him all wrong, too. He
left off the wings and the
poor guy couldn't
get off the ground.

Then the boss did what he usually does; he gave Adam busy work. One whole day the poor slob spent putting tags on those screwy animals. But Adam is learning. Just cooperate, don't rock the boat and the boss will like you.

Next, the boss did something I'll never understand. He actually gave Adam a mate. No explanation. No warning. Just plop! There she was.

Now, of course, I could see why the boss did away with the wings. They would have been a little awkward. Well, the whole experiment might have worked, in spite of all the handicaps, if the boss had stopped right there.

But no, he had to stick that apple tree in the middle and make it off limits.

There we were, as usual, doing a dumb job, guarding the front door to earth, and **never once** did God tell us to watch the walls. So, of course, Satan climbed over the wall, and the rest is ancient history. "Don't worry about it," the boss says. "I knew all along that Satan was gonna make it."

So what were we guarding the door for, I'd like to know! That's how the boss was, though, never thinkin' ahead. So guess who gets the job of driving the guy and his broad out of paradise?

Nothin' but the dirty work, that's what I said before. He don't even worry about all that snow that's waiting to fall on the two jerks. And them with nothin' but a couple of fig leaves apiece. So I snuck in a couple of shirts and socks and, if the boss finds out, it'll be the deep six for me. What's worse, he gives me this message to brighten their day.

Someday, things will get better. There'll be this Saviour (the boss's son, who else?) and he'll come down to die and although that won't change things much on earth, the gates of heaven will be open to Adam and his descendants. Nice, huh? Well, Adam hasn't ever been to heaven and I can tell him right now, it ain't that big a deal.

The only good part is he might get wings and that makes it possible to get out of heaven once in awhile.

MARILYN RIGGLE



The Silence

Dianne Marince

Her uncle was a large man. He stood six feet tall. That is, when he stood up straight. His shoulders usually slumped forward and slightly down. His gait was methodical and slow, as though each firm step was plotted with utmost care. But the sparkle in his eyes seemed to suggest that his thoughts were elsewhere, that his mind was preoccupied with scenes of remote lands and distant times.

Few people would have considered him overweight. But she noticed that his stomach pouched out at times over his black, leather belt. The more beer he consumed on weekends, the more his stomach protruded on Monday mornings. But, otherwise, he was sturdy, with a solid build, reminding her of an ancient redwood tree in a secluded section of a forest.

Each day he resembled that tree more and more as he quickly approached 50. His hair became tinted with grey at the temples. His skin grew taut. His eyes were encircled with crow's-feet. Their sparkle was replaced by a sad, pensive gaze that silently scanned the room in search of something unknown to everyone but him.

Although his mood grew sadder, she saw it as a sign of resignation, not a loss of determination. She watched his firmness and will grow each day. Yet he seldom grew impatient, for he was a wise man, much wiser than the redwood he brought to mind. Perhaps that was what so drastically frightened her. That and the gun always resting on his right hip. Her uncle was a policeman and she was scared of him, so scared that she hadn't spoken to him since she was five.

Every summer her parents spent part of their vacation with her aunt and uncle in Pennsylvania. She had to go with them, but she dreaded the trip. It wasn't that she disliked that part of the country. She lived in Iowa, and the rolling hills were a pleasant change to her. But they stayed with her uncle. That idea wasn't quite as pleasant.

She was constantly bombarded with pleas to speak to him. Her parents would beg her to talk, to say hello, to say goodbye, to say something. She would promise to try, but after six years of silence neither of them expected her to have much success, for her fear of him had grown with each year.

Now she trembled in his presence. His voice made her whole body quiver. She would rather leave his sight than chance his eyes meeting hers. But her parents raised her to be polite, and she desperately tried to be just that.

In her eleventh year she decided that it was time to make a friend of her uncle. After all, he was a very kind, generous man, the favorite of all her cousins, loved by the entire family. Her parents continually questioned her, "But, Tisha, why don't you like him? What did he ever do to you? Why won't you talk?"

She couldn't give them an answer because she didn't know. She could think of no logical explanation, no reason for her persistent silence. She only knew of her fear which seemed unexplainable even to herself.

She promised her parents that this year would be different. She was determined to overcome the barrier, the wall that prevented her from speaking. For a week before their trip, she prepared the first words she would say to him. She practiced them every night, before she went to sleep. She said them in the morning over and over again.

"Hello, Uncle Gish," she repeated to herself positioned in front of the mirror with a grimace on her face.

"Hello, hello, hello. . ." The words echoed in her mind. They haunted her in her dreams. They followed her the entire 14-hour drive to the man that was to hear them, and she was convinced that he would hear them until they reached their destination.

All eyes gazed intently upon her. Cousins, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters were all assembled to welcome them. She could imagine the scenes that were to follow: everyone shocked by her actions, gaping mouths, pats on the back. They would shower her with questions, demand explanations, offer congratulations. She would be the center of conversation, main topic of discussion. But, she merely wanted the event to go by unnoticed by all except her uncle. To face him alone would be hard enough, but to face 20 relatives would be next to impossible.

Her parents stood beside her, greeting everyone with hugs and kisses. She shyly said hello to her aunt.

"How's school, Tisha?"

"Fine, thanks," she whispered as she collected her luggage and ran towards the house. Her uncle called out after her.

"Hello, Tisha."

She turned slowly with her eyes looking down to the ground. She swayed left and right while nervously clutching the suitcases with sweaty hands. Her throat was parched; her lips refused to open. She looked around her. Blurred faces and watchful eyes surrounded her on all sides.

"Well, say hello to your Uncle Gish, Tisha," her mother spit. But she was gone. In a panic she fled into the empty house to be alone, in silence, with her fears.

The following two weeks dragged by as though they would never end. It was the middle of July, and the heat grew intolerably worse every day. There seemed to be no relief in sight as everyone guzzled down quarts of icy lemonade in the shade on the back porch or under the lone maple tree in the yard. She hated lemonade for as long as she could remember. She hated summer too.

Most people could scarcely wait for that season to come. She never understood why anyone looked forward to unbearable heat that only forced you to hide in shadows, sucking on ice, while your sticky body was drenched in sweat. All activity ceased in the summer. No one could bear to move once they found a somewhat comfortable position with their cold glass of watered-down lemonade and half-melted ice cubes. But most people rejoiced in the coming of summer and cursed the winter, the only season that she truly enjoyed and in which she felt most alive.

Every winter her parents would marvel at her increased vigor and contentment. While others grew solemn and grey, her spirit perked up to nature's way as though each flake of snow and blast of wind was a long lost friend who opened her eyes to sights of another land and whispered secrets into her ears. She was seldom known to smile during the summer, but winter brought much more to her than icicles and the flu.

"Where are you off to this time," her mother questioned. "Do you want to get sick again? For Christ's sake, Tisha, what do you do out there for hours in the snow?"

"Oh nothing much," she answered, offering as little information as possible.

"Where do you go?"

"Walking. I just walk."

"Well, I don't see how you can get far in all that mess."

"You get used to it."

She was almost out the door when her mother called out after her, "Remember your Aunt Fran and Uncle Gish are coming today, and I want you to be here when they arrive. Be back in an hour, and don't forget."

"I won't forget," she mumbled as the door closed and she stepped into her world of whiteness. And she didn't forget.

Even now she remembered that winter as though it was only yesterday. She was nine years old then but still very set in her ways. The slightest irregularity would disrupt her, and even then her uncle was more than a slight disturbance.

He visited them that winter, and she remembered the mysterious glare in his eyes the day he arrived. He spoke few words to her during the week he spent with them, but his eyes seemed to be filled with thoughts directed towards her. Those thoughts went unspoken, but she remembered that when he left, the magic of the winter went with him.

Now, two years later, he appeared more restless than he had been that winter. His movements were jerky. His eyes flashed around the room, from corner to corner, desperately searching for something, someone that was never present. His mood grew more frantic; his patience waned. She was relieved the night her parents told her they would be leaving the next morning. In a few hours she would be escaping the flashing eyes that, for some strange reason, she felt were searching for her.

That last night the entire family gathered in the living room. She sat on the floor, silent but content with the thought that she would be home tomorrow. Everyone else sat on chairs or couches around her, but she paid little attention to them or their gossip until they began to throw money on the floor beside her.

At first she was puzzled. She looked from face to face and only encountered smiles and laughs. Quarters, nickels, dimes, and pennies landed on the carpet, most of them thrown by her uncle. After a few minutes she collected all of them.

"What do you say to your uncle?" her mother promptly asked.

"Thank you," she whispered.

Then she looked up, and her mind exploded with the realization of the moment. She had spoken to him. She had spoken to her uncle for the first time in six years, and immediately she was conscious of the plot against her. She ran from the room in tears, leaving the money on the floor where it first landed. She did not speak another word until she was safely home, far from Pennsylvania, far from the rolling hills, far from her uncle and the schemes to force her into something that she wanted to do in her own time, in her own way.

The next few years were more peaceful for her. The pressure she had known regarding her uncle had lifted for the most part. Contact with the family in the east grew slight over the following years. No new trips were made; no visits took place. Only a brief phone call was made every five or six months to exchange small bits of news and the latest gossip. Her uncle always seemed to be ill, but no one was alarmed. So her mind was seldom visited by old fears and unexplainable silence until she fell ill one winter and had to see her doctor.

On her fourteenth Christmas she developed bronchitis, a well-known illness to her, but nevertheless, her parents insisted she see Dr. Eggly to insure a quick recovery. She avidly protested, not for fear of a doctor, but for her dislike of this particular one, which, once again, she could not explain.

"I'm not going," she calmly wheezed to her parent's dismay.

"You are," they retorted.

"I'm not."

"You are. Honestly, Tish, what is wrong with you? Dr. Eggly is a good man, a fine doctor. He's never hurt you. You're sick, and that's what doctors are for."

"He's sick too."

"That's enough from you, young lady," her father ended as he left the room with fire in his eyes.

She knew it was enough. The battle was lost; the orders were obeyed. The next day she saw the doctor long enough to get a quick shot and a scribbled prescription. But she also found the reason for her intense dislike of the man that had just helped cure her. Oddly enough, it lead her thoughts back to her uncle.

The resemblance between the two was slight. The doctor was as tall as her uncle, but he was thin and lean. His long, bony arms reached past his hips like a monkey's, but his posture was perfect, erect and proud. His thin, black hair lay straight. His eyes were dark and beady, like abandoned pits of a deserted coal mine. She could find little physical reason to link her doctor to her uncle. Yet she was aware of something in his presence that called forth the same intense emotions within her that were aroused by her uncle. She disliked them both, but still she knew not why.

Several weeks passed before she remembered something of her childhood that cleared up part of her unsolved, puzzling silence to her uncle. She remembered a scene when she was nearly five years old. He uncle had taken her to downtown Pittsburgh one afternoon. He was dressed in his uniform. The gun rested on his hip. She was angry with him for some reason, but now she couldn't remember what he had done to her.

As they were walking along a busy street they approached a corner. The light was green, and her uncle crossed, but she remained behind, watching him and his gun with angry eyes. The light turned red as she finally ran across the street to follow. A car slammed on its brakes and would have hit her if not for her uncle's quick reaction as he snatched her up and set her down safely on the sidewalk.

"Don't you ever do that again," he wildly screamed. His face was crimson, and it looked as though his veins would pop out from beneath the skin. She said nothing, but the tears poured from her eyes. It was then that she swore to herself never to talk to him again. She had almost kept her promise except for two words of gratitude coerced from her six years later.

The memory was still fresh in her mind when the news came. A quick phone call informed them that her uncle was dead. Twelve months before he had been given three months to live. After nine additional months of suffering he finally succumbed to cancer. She left with her parents immediately for the rolling hills that no longer seemed to be so pleasant.

She hated wakes. They were so pointless, prolonging suffering. The family merely subjected itself to unnecessary, self-inflicted grieving and hurt. But she attended along with the others. She witnessed the hysterical episodes of sobbing, and she wished she could remain in the background. But she knew that was impossible.

Slowly, fearfully, Tisha approached the casket. She thought she had prepared herself adequately for this moment until she reached the wooden box and looked down upon the man it held. He was a stranger to her, not at all resembling the uncle she once knew and feared. Now, this man, this stranger, once big and solid like a redwood tree, barely weighed ninety lbs. Over his entire body etchings of pain and suffering left their marks to signify his defeat.

Tisha could scarcely recognize him. His hair was frosty white, not only at the temples but over his entire head. His cheeks were hollow. His milky white skin was pale and dry. His stomach had sunken in, and the bones protruded all over his body as though they would pierce the skin at any moment. No smile showed upon his lips.

Tisha searched his quiet face with her eyes as if she had never seen the man before. He had suffered. She could not imagine how much he had suffered. She wondered if his eyes had ever found what they were looking for. Now they were closed, motionless and shriveled. She wondered, and she cried, alone, by his side in the midst of chaos.

"Goodbye, Uncle Gish," she whispered. Her time had come. She had found her way. ■

SEEKING THE ANSWER TO LIFE

She came before Jehovah.

He was having a hair transplant.
He grimaced, but motioned her in.
YOU HAVE A PROBLEM?

I HAVE COME HERE LOOKING FOR THE ANSWER TO LIFE

The needles fell on Jehovah's skull
Like catapulting stars.
AS A MATTER OF FACT, WE'VE ORDERED A STUDY,
He petted the Dog Star.

Jehovah, I'm afraid I haven't that much time.

Jehovah's transparent slot machine
Lit up with his coast to coast smile.
Already tufts were pushing up.
ALL FLESH IS GRASS,
He laughed.

But how will I get through the day?

A rocket of hair shot up and down.
DON'T TAKE THIS UNKINDLY
I'M VERY BUSY.
DO YOU THINK YOU COULD JUST GO
BURY YOURSELF?

ARLENE STONE



M.A. GILROY



JOHN NIEMANN

DISCOVERY

*My thoughts
like my body
long to be explored,
yearn to be desired.*

*Loving you,
we will explore
in the quiet moments
and discover*

the silent words.

CAROL ANN BEKAVAC

UNTRUE HUE

BLACK
IS
MY
FAVORITE
HUE,

EXCEPT
WHEN
IT'S
TINTED

AND
NO
LONGER
TRUE.

DEMETRIS HARRIS

TO SAD EYES

You're all I think of
I reach out to touch you
 but you're all a dream.
And I blow kisses cloaked with my human misery
 out of my mouse hole.

And within my room
The shouts of my Hell
vibrate within my empty cranulum.

Each wall colored
with a different shade of Anger
spits and falls down on me.
And every human part of me
turns old,
as every picture on the walls
stare cold.
But the music on my stereo
is quite warm.

With Pain and Sadness
and holding hands with Loneliness,
I retreat into another mouse hole,
to hide my face
another night more.

And my World was over
the day you refused to read every poem like this.
And the Sun's golden Shafts of Light
have turned to my eyes
dark and cold. . .cold. . .cold. . .
and my Feet now refuse to walk this world alone.
They want only your Feet,
so they can share their road once more.

The Moon has ceased to be romantic.
It's now a vacant lot,
a mouse's desired home.
And your touch and womanly kiss is long lost,
an unforgotten memory,
that I can't get out of my daydreams.

And all I do is stab myself,
with every kind of butcher's knife
that I can lay my hands on.
And this soothes the pain,
by stopping my persistant, very human moans!
And a Sea of Tears
my Heart and Soul have created.
It now is drowning these useless dreams, volitlons, that reappear,
and that I blow my every affectionate kiss to.

So, I write this poem,
so you will glve it its destined death.
And so it would have a quick Pain,
And a quick End!
So it would not suffer like me,
as I drown my soul's entrails wth rum, wine, llquor,
 peyote, cocaine, dope,
 and my favorite the Jimsonweed.
And I drown my liver another night,
like the rest (other nghts),
that have walked before my tormenting Barren Road.

JESÚS GUTIÉRREZ AGUILERA

DIANA

*She has come to make her home
Here by the restive water,
By dunes that take
The giant shape of dream.*

*The sand wind blows
And cedar darkens.*

*She has come to live alone
Amid berries picked
By summer-ripe sun,
With memories
That persist
Like pine.*

*The sand wind blows
And cedar darkens.*

*She has come to watch
The horizon grow bright,
To dance as children do
In the wavering light
Of yesterdays gone.
Penumbra of the dune.*

*The sand wind blows
And cedar darkens.*

*She has come to feel
The twilight fall
On raccoon and owl alike,
To know their searching
Through a dark
For nothing ever known.*

*The sand winds blow,
The sand wind blows,
And cedar darkens.*

DAVID KUPRIN



M.A. GILROY

LIMBO

I can't complain, I had been told
there would be days like this
When the rain waited and the mist
never once
lifted to unfold
The line between
Here
and
Eternity

LOUISE EGNATZ



ROBERT GALLIEN

THE CONFESSIONAL

"Here comes another one out of the box; cleansed of sin. I wonder how long his return will take? I better get in there. I sure hope Campbell's in, that goddamn Ramsey yells too much. Well, if it's Ramsey, I'll just forget a few sins. Hell, the last time he gave me four rosaries and two masses on Saturday. Saturday! I couldn't believe it."

I took a few steps and stopped before an old, dirty red curtain that separated the sinners from the saved. The temporarily saved.

"I know times are tough but this curtain is ridiculous. At least they could have washed it. I get depressed just looking at it. Maybe it's supposed to depress me? Maybe it's supposed to symbolize the condition of my soul, or maybe the financial condition of the church."

I pulled the curtain aside to enter. I could see the box had a hardwood floor. It was old. The finish had been walked away through the years and dirt was caked between the seams of the boards.

"Someone should take a broom to this place. God, it's filthy. I guess it's an even trade; dirty pants for a clean soul."

The walls seemed to be plywood with a thick, dark, walnut finish. There were numerous scratches in the finish and a few etchings of other bored occupants. Against the right wall, was a kneeler on the floor. Above the kneeler, a white handkerchief hung concealing the screen separating the sinner from the savior. Below the handkerchief was an elbow rest.

I entered the confessional and let the curtains fall back to their age-taught position. Darkness once again prevailed within the cubicle. The only light that entered the box was a narrow luminous beam streaming through the gap between the curtains. As I knelt waiting for my turn, I heard the priest and patient next to me. Their conversation shot through the box. I could hear it distinctly; it was girl trouble.

"Just my luck, it's Ramsey. Well I'll be forgetting the sex sins. Let's see, I lied five times, missed mass on Sunday twice, and cursed so many times I can't remember. That's good enough; I'll be damned if I'm going to be in church **this** Saturday . . . I wonder who that guy is? He must have had **some** date the other night. He sounds about my age, the sins are the same."

I heard the priest ask, "Why do you let these situations get out of hand?"

"Well father, I never want these things to happen, somehow they just do."

"What a line; if he's like me, he's thinking about the next date while he's taking her home from the first. He never plans on it . . . What a line! . . . Who is that guy? . . . I better start thinking about **my** confession, he'll be done in a minute. Let's see, I lied five times, missed mass on Sunday twice, and cursed so many times I can't remember. I wonder if I should use 'disobeyed my parents'?"

I began to shift from knee to knee because they were becoming sore from waiting.

"I can't stand the way this place smells. That incense is too strong. I remember burning that stuff in my basement so my parents couldn't smell the cigarette smoke. I never did get used to it."

I started sniffing and sneezed a couple of times.

"I must have really stirred that dust up. I can taste it, makes my mouth dry. **That** smells like garlic, don't tell me he's been eating those goddamn pickles again. It's bad enough to be locked in the box but this makes me feel like a pickle in a crock."

I could hear Ramsey going through the final absolutions. I put my hands on the elbow rest and began working it up and down. It was loose. I got a high pitched squeak when I moved it up and a lower pitched squeak when I moved it down.

"Somebody better tighten that down or it's going to fall off one of these days. I wonder where the screws are."

I began running my fingers along the board to find the screws, instead I found some dried gum on the bottomside. I started picking it with my fingers, trying to pry it loose. I finally worked it off and smelled it.

"Smells like doublemint. It's not mine, I like spearmint."

Suddenly I heard the other occupant leaving and I had to see who it was. I pulled the curtain aside and peeped out.

"Tom? Why that lying son of a - He's the guy who would **never** mess around with Judy. That lying ass. Well, at least he's normal; for awhile there I thought he was pure will power . . . That took a lot of guts to confess everything, especially with Ramsey . . . If Tom can do it, why can't I? I've had my share of these situations. Am I afraid? What can Ramsey do besides yell and make me come to church this Saturday. Maybe . . ."

The priest suddenly opened the small door to my confessional and I let the curtain go. I took a second to gather my thoughts then began my confession.

"Bless me, father, for I have sinned, my last confession was one month ago. I lied five times, missed mass on Sunday twice, and cursed so many times I can't remember. Oh yeah, I also disobeyed my parents once."



WARREN ARNOLD

*Fascades of friendliness
To hide the monotonous dead
From the happy people
(We don't need another epidemic)
As mother tiptoed in
To plant good-night kisses
On vacant cheeks
And they wonder why
We're not like other kids
Twenty years ago
Bifocals dim
And does anybody really care
Whose football team wins?*

D. ERICKSEN

JAKE'S DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

When old winds across older mountains drone,
sing along caves and empty basins where
the only everlasting thing is bone,

I try to find some spot on tired stone
to carve our names. Blunt, this knife. Cold, the air,
when old winds across older mountains drone.

I remember a bird. . .white. . .It had flown
round and round some bluff, then crashed in despair.
The only everlasting thing is bone.

You sketched a poem, chewed an ice cream cone,
and asked me if a bird might *really care*
when old winds across older mountains drone.

I smiled, shook my head, said, "My how you've grown!",
ran my fingers through honey-sweetened hair,
The only everlasting thing is bone.

Six years ago! I guess I should have known
better than to misread the signs out there
when old winds across older mountains drone:
"The only everlasting thing is bone."

NICH TALARICO

THE 7 O'CLOCK POEM

*The subject is uncertain,
oh, i know what it is,
but i don't wish
to talk of it;*

*It's better left unsaid
since my words
would only glance off
the indifference about me
& would admit
to no feeling
other than token compassion,
of which i need none.*

MICHAEL GOODSON

INCIPIENT HOPE

The first streaks of early dawn were rapidly melting away the darkness and with the oncoming day, the moisture of early morning dew was slowly dissipating. The stillness of night was hurriedly receding, pushed back by unfamiliar sounds of prison life. The heels of the guard's shoes clicked on the pavement below as he walked his patrol. From his post atop a seemingly unscalable wall, another guard called down a morning greeting to a friend.

These were the things he beheld while gazing out into the world. A slight breeze sauntered through the open window, gently stirring his hair and caressing his face. His hands were tightly grasped around the bars that obstructed his freedom, as though he would rip them from their solid foundation, but chose only to rest, content, upon them.

"If only we could remove the bars, then freedom would surely be ours," came a voice, interrupting the silence.

"The bars are not the answer. They are only a symbol of mankind, of today's society. To have freedom, society must be remolded. No, the bars are not our problem. Remove them, and there are twice as many to replace them."

"Why, my friend, have they locked you in this desolate imprisonment? Have you killed some person or perhaps you are a thief?"

"No, young one. What I have done is far worse than the things you imagine. I have spoken out against society. I have voiced an opinion and for this, I have brought execution upon myself."

"Sir, I do not understand. What is meant by 'opinion'? You confuse me."

"It is a word, that used to be, but has long since been forbidden. It means to have one's own ideas or thoughts about something. You are too young to remember, but many years ago this nation was run on public opinion. Would you like for me to tell you of society before the time of the Reproofing Machines?"

"But, sir, there is no time before that."

"Ah, but there is. It was a time full of people, who lived their own lives. They actually had privacy. They even had thoughts of their own."

"But I have thoughts of my own."

"So you are taught, but not so. All of your thoughts are censored. Your brain is controlled by the Reproofing Machines, which let you believe you are your own master, but truly masters you. Yes, little one, you are no more than a robot. I am captured and I must be destroyed. I am the last, with me dies the hope of freedom."

"Lies! I am not a robot. I control my own thoughts."

"Why, son, you can't even cry because the machines will not let you, so how can you be your own master?"

"You speak nonsense. Cry!? What does this word of yours mean?"


"It means that you feel sorrow, remorse or joy and express these feelings by shedding tears. Today this has disappeared because you are not allowed to have feelings of your own."

With these words the conversation died, for footsteps were heard ringing through the corridor. His time had come. He quietly waited until they had reached the door before he moved. They opened the barred door and he obediently walked out. As he was escorted away, he turned and smiled.

"Good-bye, friend," were his final words before he was lead away to meet his destiny.

The prisoner stood watching as they disappeared down the echoing hallway. Slowly a strange feeling crept upon him and to his astonishment his eyes became laden with moisture and a single tear ran aimlessly down the length of his face and fell silently at his feet.

Rick Oliver



THE STARS ARE CRUSHED ICE
IN A COCA-COLA SKY
ON A SUMMER NIGHT.

PAMELA BORTZ

(I Ask You)

IS THIS THE SOLE OF A CRIMINAL?

This is the story of two little bugs who fell in love one day until, suddenly, out on the sidewalk, one of them was smashed:

Two little bugs fell in love yesterday. One of them was involved in another interesting experience. While out on the sidewalk, he was smashed.

Newspapers all around the world printed their story:

There were once two little bugs. One day, they fell in love. Suddenly, out on the sidewalk, one of them was smashed.

Enormous pictures accompanied the report. Page-size photos of the culprit's under-sole were flashed via wire-service all around the universe. (These photos were taken by a federal agent working on a smuggling case who cleverly disguised himself as a crack in the sidewalk. His camera took these shots only accidentally as he was being stepped upon - they were later shown on t.v.)

People who had been in the area at the alleged time of the crime were called on by police investigating the incident. None of them could (or would) give any clues to the culprit's identity. Although the sidewalks were crowded at the time with swarms of people, no one had eyewitnessed the incident. (Or so they said.) It was obvious that the culprit would be free.

I only offer you this story to show you that such stories really do exist. I only ask that you do not touch this story with your fingers or toes and that you stand back, away from it, and allow it to grow. For this is the story of two little bugs who fell in love one day until suddenly, out on the sidewalk, one of them was smashed: ■

Keith Brown

SURREALISTIC REFLECTIONS ON A
P.U.C.C. LOUNGE PIANIST

Andy is a piano —
the notes ring out from him
like sprouting hairs
on a bald man's chest . . .
He mixes blue notes
with rainbow sounds
on the canvas in his mind . . .

'Tis sad he only comes and goes . . .

DEB JONAITIS







JOHN NIEMANN

LOSS

There is no warmth of morning wind
Nor summer sun's touch of joy
Nor the sound of music in early dawn
That can rest upon the soul
Of the man who hates his job.

MICHAEL GOODSON

dreams and . . .

In our timely limited existence
Dreams are far better,
Only then in sculptured thoughts
Might life last forever;
For most in reality
Is half what it seems,
All the beautiful completes
Are found only in dreams.

TOM McCAHON



... reality



WARREN ARNOLD

r
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sitates
plushy
pompous
pillow-stuffing
santas
i
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stead of
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anonymous

Lyrics from LETTER FOR MUNTOR

There's no use now in crying tears, it's over.
Our new life is slowly folding itself away . . .
And the friendship that we shared is now all over.
Ohio must have taken that away.
And our old room is messed up now by some red ladies,
They smile and click their fingers as I pass.

The love we made that night I think is over,
And I'll die if I don't see you anymore.
You just have to return to make things better.
Then the lot of all my troubles will be gone.
And we'll laugh about the problems we were having.
And we'll talk about the hard times that we've faced.

And if you're straight in thinking that might matter.
You might not want my loving, anymore.
And your friends say there's no hope in what I'm doing.
But Jesus Christ, you know I got to try.
Those old friends of mine, now really, they don't matter.
'Cause I never gave them love like I gave you.

Some strange face is prowling through our hallways.
And I'm crying 'cause he's fouling where you walked.
And I'll go and burn some candles and some incense.
At the room where you once laid your blessed head.
And I'll pray to God to try and bring you back soon.
But I think that it's too late for even that.

And maybe there's no use in my own living
'Cause I don't want life if I can't live with you.

RAY BAKER

*lovers
are
no longer
an enchanting breed:
gods
bestowing love charms
died
when benevolent religion
became senior lit*

BARBARA LONG

DECEMBER 17th

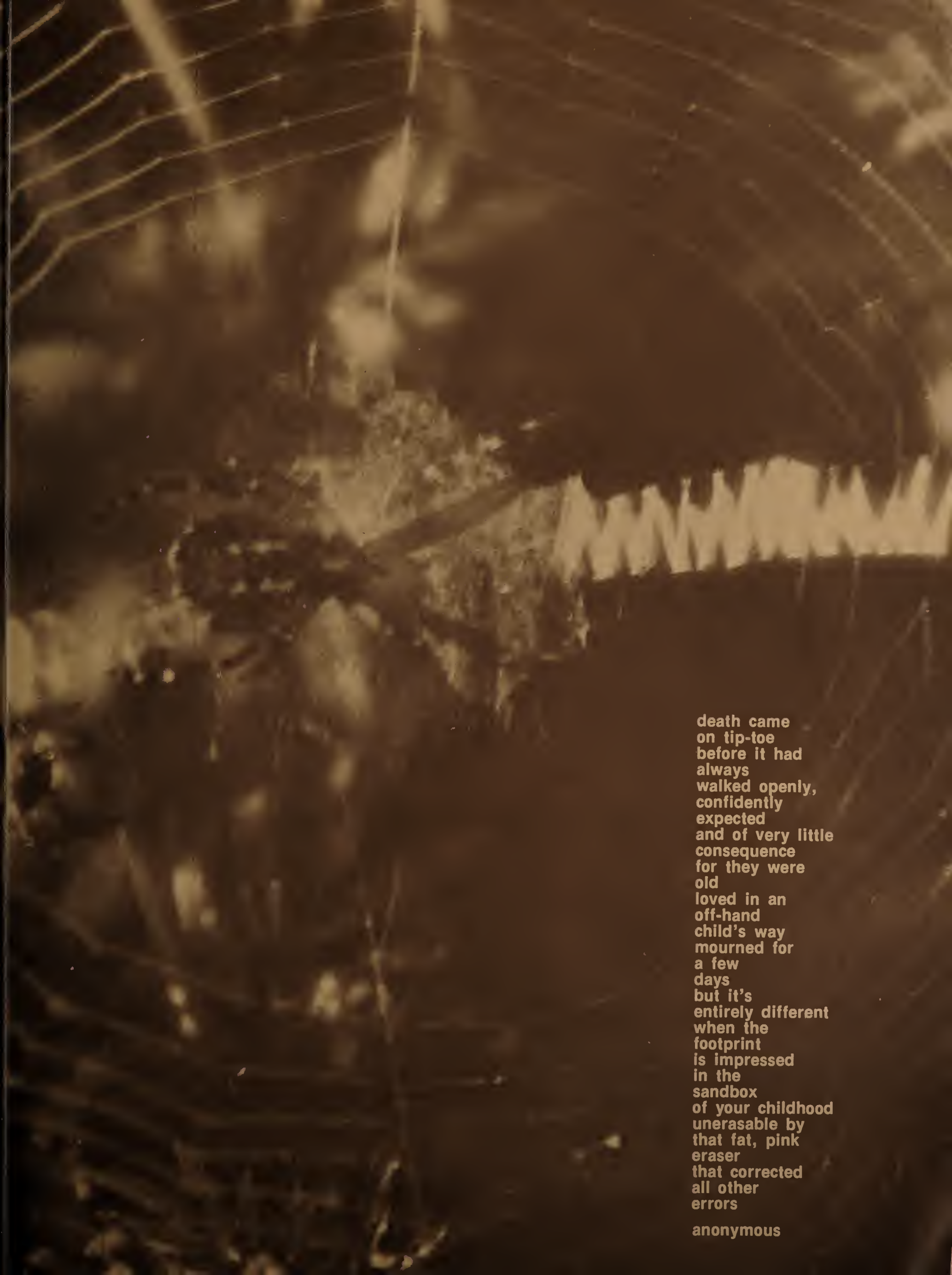
There was once a cowboy
She met him today, at work.
He was beautiful, for a cowboy
He had a smooth, deep, velvet-like voice.
(That's because he had congestion.)

She saw him later, in some bar
They talked and talked and talked . . .
And he talked, and he was no bullshit.
And she talked, and she was bullshit.

And him, and those fantastic studded pants, left—
Alone . . .

RAY BAKER

JOHN NIEMANN

A sepia-toned photograph of a snowy landscape. In the foreground, there is a dark, shadowed area, possibly a path or a clearing. In the background, a line of evergreen trees stands against a bright, snowy sky. The overall tone is nostalgic and quiet.

death came
on tip-toe
before it had
always
walked openly,
confidently
expected
and of very little
consequence
for they were
old
loved in an
off-hand
child's way
mourned for
a few
days
but it's
entirely different
when the
footprint
is impressed
in the
sandbox
of your childhood
unerasable by
that fat, pink
eraser
that corrected
all other
errors

anonymous



JOHN NIEMANN

VILLAGE LIFE

*The crowing of the cocks
Announce the hot summer morning
And the chirping of birds
Break the stillness of dawn.*

*The first hazy light
Creeps like a thief
Stealing the darkness
From the barren fields.*

*As the birds leave their nests
The village comes to life
And the farmers follow too
With two oxen by their side.*

*The sun appears shyly
Over the distant hills
Spreading hot rays
Over the village and fields.*

*The farmers bow their heads
And humbly fold their hands
Thanking the One above
For everything they have.*

*Beginning thus the day's work
They slowly plough the fields
To prepare a bed so soft
For planting of the seeds.*

*The wives now appear
In brightly colored clothes
And go to the Village well
To draw water in earthen pots.*

*Balancing two pots on their heads
Their long braids swaying like snakes
Their anklets making music
They walk gracefully to their huts.*



JOHN NIEMANN

*The sun climbs higher
In the blue cloudless sky
Adding yet more heat
To the already hot air.*

*The women come out again
Carrying the mid-day meal
For their husbands to eat
In the shade of the trees.*

*The oxen also relax
From their hard task on the field
They chew the tall green grass
And drink from the near-by creek.*

*Soon the farmer returns to his work
With sweat streaming down his body
Mingling with the brown soil
And strengthening his ties to his land.*

*When the western sky
Is set ablaze with the setting sun
When the sky is brightly clothed
With the retiring sun*

*When the coming dusk
Relieves the air of its intense heat
When the twittering birds
Before the darkness, retreat*

*Then the exhausted farmers
Along with the tired oxen
Return to their thatched huts
Walking side by side like kinfolk.*

*Thus flows the life in the village
In the same simple way
Yet with so much peace and calm
Life passes in a tranquil way.*

PRAVINA SOMANI

Reflection of Death



The smirk was evident as he
came assuredly closer,
The long, silver knife clutched
firmly in his hand, gleaming.
I could feel my body beginning
to tremble,
My mind hopelessly searching for time.

TO BE

I AM LIFE, (I WAS)
BEGOTTEN OF EXPERIENCE
EUCCHARISTIC ENERGY
OF THE UNENDING URGE
TO CREATE.

I AM AN IDEA (I CAN BE)
HIDDEN BETWEEN ALLITERATION
AND RHYME. EACH TIME
ONE MAN DISCOVERS ME,
I AM BORN
AGAIN.

I AM A DREAM; EXQUISITE. (I HAVE BEEN)
IMPERFECT, BELOVED MEMORY
OF SLEEP, REINCARNATION
OF DESIRE
AWAKENED.

I AM PURE JOY (I WILL BE)
ECSTASY OF ALL COMMUNION
YET I AM NOTHING
IF NO ONE CARES.

MARILYN RIGGLE

seventeen summers

(leaves

tomorrow

to

die)

D. ERICKSEN

EAST AND WEST

Like a child
 I sit
 in a swing whose
 chains I wind
 tightly,
 slowly circling,
 the feet, anchors:
Face the East
 where all the
 streets are known,
 plotted to scale,
 transferrable to paper.
Here is the map.
You can read it.
Face the West
 where the sun's
 so bright
 it hurts to read.
You could dream there,
 dreamy streets
 not to be plotted
 on a map
 you couldn't read.

Like a child
 I sit would
 tightly
 afraid of the spin
 and its end.

Dig my toes in.

LARA MANNING

MUSIC OF THE GODS

Laugh!

And the music of the gods wells up in the cavity of your mind like the hot inflating of a red balloon.

Laugh!

And the little hilarities of life float by in the stream of your existence, and the hungry arms of your subconscious grasp out to them for safety.

Laugh!

And the bulging, boiling volcano in the recesses of your body explodes and erupts, spewing forth the hot lava of laughter.

Laugh!

And the harmonic tones of sporadic laughter trip through the airiness of your life and lilt upwards like the instrumental syllables of a racing orchestra.

Laugh!

And the onrushing gush of water finally ceases, leaving you in a drained but quenched state of self-satisfaction. And in the brief span of infinity when you have lost control of your laughing tongue and heaving sides, you have visited the realms of the heavens and sung in the chorus of the gods.

DONNA WISNIEWSKI



JOHN NIEMANN



THE STOIC

I'd love to reach and touch your soul
And kiss your thoughts with fire
To make you see platonic thoughts
Can soar beyond desire
Conversed in thoughts without a shell
To weigh your body down
And float your mind in alpha waves
Beyond your hopes and higher

WARREN BANKS

OLD MAN, I WISH

Old Man, Your empty chair,
Stained and scarred with old man wear,
Faces the same spotted window
You contemplated, minute years ago.
Spots new to this season's rain,
To your undiscerning eye, the same.

Fireplace warmth could not replace
Once warm love of blood's embrace,
Now grown to chilling busyness
With not a time for burning logs at rest,
That warmed your footstool, now bare,
Unused before an old man's chair.

Noisy children, slamming doors,
Incessant phonetalk; all deplored.
Now never note your absent voice,
A scold to faulty youthful choice.
They noticed when you were there
And avoided your corner and your chair.

"Be quiet, Grampa's sleeping."
Familiar phrase repeated, keeping
Voices stifled, footsteps cautioned, while
Plaints of freedom limited compile.
No more frustrated energies now,
You sleep so soundly now, now.

Your hat awaits its daily walk,
Displacing other more important articles
Upon the closet shelf.
Old Man, I Wish
That you could toss it
Just once more upon a chair
For me to pick it up and put away
And not complain.

The ashtray sits inviolate
As when you judged the distance wrong
And left it pure.
Old Man, I Wish
That you could drop the ashes
From your careless cigarette
Upon the carpet one more time
So I could clean it up
And not complain.

Old Man, I Wish
That these, your many faults,
Were with us still that I might yet
Ignore my own, which daily,
Your empty chair
Condemns.

MARILYN RIGGLE



GARY SCHEIDT

SUPERNOVA

SONG OF OSIRIS

*Leo and Ursa,
in triumphant cadence
can rebuild this temple, Earth,
and cure it's leprous keeper,
the human.*

*When they unite in motion
before the eyes of Cain,
the Cat will be our shaman
for Isis lives again.*

*All Canis shall be Major
and guide the quickened hand,
when 'knowing' is renewing
this starfish in the sand.*

TED ZAGAR

POEM

Cocooned in a shell of indifference,
My mind lurches from nothing to nowhere,
Juiced with the jazz from FM.

Some quest for vision in a shaded room
Spurs me on to remembering what I knew.

My soul falls over on its own edge
And slices off a poem, raw with words,
To feed the hungry pupa inside the crust,

The struggle to get out is violent
And yields a creature of unexpected shape
With glowing eyes, talons, and bat wings,
Mute in company, but eloquent alone.

There is no turning back to the caterpillar;
thoughts must now charge the lonely air.

JOHN BOLINGER

THE REBIRTH OF WONDER

A Farce in one act

Bill Palmer

Setting:

A branch in a tall tree in the center of a large urban park. Two aging magicians sit on the branch side by side. Directly below them a man lays dying. Two policemen and a small crowd have gathered around the man. They seem to be waiting for help.

PEEKER (*matter of factly*). I saw his death touch him by the fountain.

KAKAZBAL. I didn't notice.

PEEKER (*jokingly*). Your getting old.

KAKAZBAL (*agitated*). Who cares? What difference does it make if I saw his death touch him at the fountain, or if I see it whirling around him now, or if I see it at all or if I see it their way?

PEEKER. It's made a difference to you. Since you've seen your death you've lived your life accordingly. It's been a source of power to you.

KAKAZBAL. Shit! What good is power anymore? There's no more magic in the world. Might as well see it their way, (*gestures towards the crowd.*). An old fart sunning himself on a park bench.

PEEKER. Branch

KAKAZBAL. Whatever. An old fart waiting for a heart attack or the big C. Make that two old farts.

PEEKER (*angry*). Speak for yourself. (*Stamping his foot in thin air*). You know damn well that's not what death is! (*Flustered*). Old branches on park farts, heart attacks, cancer. That's only how they explain it.

KAKAZBAL. Now you've got it fool! They gotta explain everything. The arrogant, ignorant bastards have to explain everything we do, everything we are, everything mysterious and wonderful in the world.

PEEKER (*regaining his composure*). That's their nature. Man's a rational creature. They need to explain things.

KAKAZBAL. Rational hell! Is it "rational" for them to assume, walking around in the crap they've created, that they can explain everything? They explain everything and feel nothing.

PEEKER (*defensively*). They're not all like that.

KAKAZBAL. Those who aren't are worse. They can't explain it so they listen, if they care at all, to the arrogant, ignorant ones who explain it. Usually for a price. Reason? Is that reason? They either create or accept the most unimaginative reasons for everything and then wonder why they're bored. They've reasoned everything that's magic about themselves and the worlds they belong to out of existence. Now, they walk like goddamn zombies down the narrow corridors of their reason, the sounder the logic, the happier they think they are.

PEEKER. But life is chaotic, you said it yourself the world's a mess. They use their reason to cope. They've got problems. Race problems, sex problems, crime problems. They worry about wars, nuclear wars. One big boom and it's all over.

KAKAZBAL. Nuclear wars, big boom, hell they'll bore themselves right off the face of the earth.

PEEKER. B..But...

KAKAZBAL (*factitiously*). They're so reasonable, so boring, so bored that now they're trying to explain, define or reach agreement on precisely when, if ever, life begins and ends. Eventually compromises will be reached, a definition arrived at and made holy by law, and no one will have to worry about it ever again. We'll know precisely when we are alive and when we are dead. El Popo says life begins when the S-P-E-R-M meets the egg. He don't even say join. That's dirty. He says meet. Like they just been introduced. The A.M.A. says when the fetus begins to resemble a human, so many weeks. Others say when the baby "arrives". The compromise: Life begins when the child is toilet trained. Now when is death? Death, say the doctors of the head, occurs at the instant of brain wave cessation. Half the population right down the tube. Death, say the doctors of the body, occurs when the vital organs cease functioning. El Popo again he says, with characteristic infallibility, when the soul leaves the body. So these cops, Murphy and O'Toole stand there waiting for the soul to leave the body. For the report; the soul left the body at approximately 2:32 p.m. but could not be reached for questioning. The compromise, death occurs with the cessation of sexual activity.

PEEKER. That's ridiculous. You're being cynical.

KAKAZBAL. Cynical! Up yours! All I'm saying fool is that their whole world consists of definitions and descriptions. No wonder, no awe, no magic. . . (*voice falling off*), no magicians.

PEEKER (*trying to comfort him*). But there are others. Those who sincerely believe that there's something more to life than that. Witness, dear Kakazbal, the revived interest in religion. The popularity of astrology, interest in the occult. . .

KAKAZBAL. Witness chump, racoon coats, hula hoops and streaking. Witness Billy Graham, Mararishi Jr., the Reverend Ike and the Exorcist. You know that's all bullshit . . . And the so called "followers" flock to it like flies. Astrology. The fools use that to get laid. You know magic isn't in the realm of their idiotic cults, it's individual. All the cults do is teach them to be members of the cult. The cultmasters, I call them cultmasters, start with a somewhat reasonable premise designed to appeal to a broad crossection of the populace, sprinkle it liberally with ill conceived myths and the promise of miracles, shake it up until it's distorted enough to take on a mystic quality, top it all off with guilt and lay it on the suckers. And they fall in line like sheep.

PEEKER (*pleading*). But, please Kakazbal they're only trying to find the right path for themselves. As they say they're trying to get it together.

KAKAZBAL (*almost shouting*). But **they are** the path, they were **born** "together". "Getting it together" you know what they mean by that? They mean they have it together when everything is explained to their satisfaction. They start out awed by themselves and the world and then begin to explain themselves, their actions and the world. What they can't understand they put out of their minds and proceed down their well-ordered "paths" joining their cults, reading their horoscopes, following their leaders, praising their Gods and demeaning themselves.

PEEKER (*very cautiously*). To me, all these things, seem to be perhaps . . . maybe a step in the right direction.

KAKAZBAL. Step! Step on a crack, break your mother's back. Revived interest in religion you say! More explanations more distractions! Picture one of your so called "sincere believers" walking through this city. In a one mile walk down State street the religious fanatics would tear the fool to pieces. He'd hear a beady eyed bastard preaching from or to a fireplug. The world is coming to an end! The Hare Khrisna nuts would dance around him, blinding him with their bald heads and pony tails, confusing him with their chanting, shoving closed books and open palms in his face; he'd escape into a doorway where a long-haired creature with the look of love and a crucifixion T-shirt would shove a pocket-sized New Testament in his hand and a plastic magnetic Jesus in his pocket. Disorientated now he staggers past Halfway Houses, Muhammeds Missions and Massage Parlors. Occult bookstores, dirty bookstores and combinationsthereof. Astrosuck! Finally the Salvation Army rescues him from the Jews for Jesus, sweeps him inside and fills his belly with soup and his heart with guilt. He sneaks out the john window, and seeks sanctuary in of all places a Baptist Church. Finds the preacher pissed off, seems somebody's been puttin' lottery tickets in the poor box. "Can't make no bets with God," he screams. God's holdin all the cards—Always was and always will be. Runs into the street, finds the nearest bridge and throws himself in the river. The Bible, Secrets of Karma, Salvation Army soup, plastic Jesus and the Black Panther newspaper float to the top. He never had a chance.

PEEKER (*obviously trying to change the subject, looks to the dying man*). Neither does this guy.

KAKAZBAL. Hell he doesn't. He's seeing his death, like when we saw ours. He's finding out that he's much more than what he thought he was. That most of what he knows isn't true.

PEEKER. But it's too late.

KAKAZBAL. It's never too late. Your the one who's getting old, if that's possible, you're starting to think like they do.

PEEKER. (*apologetically*). I only meant . . .

KAKAZBAL (*softly*). I know what you meant. You only meant his life could have been more. You meant he's seeing his life from both sides now. You meant he's seeing that his dreams and his actions were equally important. That he and this tree have something in common. That the grass he lays on whispers in his ear. That the breeze bridges time and carries secrets. He sees us, in this branch. He's filled with awe and wonder. He's never been more alive. Only the explanations, definitions, classifications and descriptions that explained, defined, classified, described and otherwise limited the life and times of whoever he is are dying.

A distant siren is heard.

COP I. Here comes the ambulance.

COP II. Too late for this one, the stiff's about to crap out.

KAKAZBAL (*screams*). Stop the world!

Everything stops. A state of suspended animation grips the city. The crowd below is motionless. All is silent.

PEEKER. What good is that? You can't stop death.

KAKAZBAL (*pleased with himself*). I know that, I want to let it happen here. Under this tree. I'm giving him a natural death. A great gift.

PEEKER. But he's still young maybe they can save him.

KAKAZBAL. Save him? Save him from what? Save him from the peace and serenity he feels? Save him from the wonders he's witnessing? Save him for the ambulance? Save him so they can attach wires to his chest, his arms, jam tubes up his nostrils? Save him so they can force air into his lungs as the ambulance screeches around corners with that damn siren screaming scaring the hell out of him not to mention everyone else while some maniac pounds on his chest? No Peeker, then his death would be just like his life. The ambulance, the attendants, the tubes, the wires, the machines, and the siren, all perfectly reasonable, technological marvels but completely understandable commonplace even but at the same time intolerably terrifying.

PEEKER. I meant save his life, he's seen now. He would be like us, he could be like us, he could be a magician. Our friend!

KAKAZBAL. Poor Peeker. You're so naive, you underestimate them. They'd take the magic away. Even if he remembered anything he'd experienced under this tree, which I doubt, after that ambulance ride, they'd take it all away. Force him to "re-adjust," they call it. After telling him, you'll have to change your lifestyle, change your eating habits. After returning his nervous system with amphetamines or tranquilizers, depending of course on its present frequency, after telling friends and relatives how to aid in the "re-adjustment," if he remembered what he felt under this tree, they'd begin to work on that. Like a child he'd tell them how he saw his life and his dreams as one. How he was bound to the earth, and joked about it with the tree, and the breeze brought him a mist from the Nile, a gift from the Pharaohs. And how he saw magicians and magic in the tree. And the shrink would say, "Ve in the profession," whores call it the business, "call dot condition imagined recall vit disassociated hysterical delusions, nothing to worry about, vit is common prior to death." And if he remembered, he'd tell the shrink it was much more than that and that he felt at the same time yet that he'd always been under that tree. The shrink would chuckle, shake his head and say "in layman's terms ve in the profession call dot the feeling of Deja Vu, vat is de feeling upon being in a place for the first time vat you have been ther before. Nothing to worry about a feeling common prior to death, equally common in life." But if he remembered he'd say no, I always was there, I always will be there and I'm always everywhere. The shrink more serious now says, "vats ridiculous, vats omnipresence, a condition only attributable to the Supreme Being or God, depending on your beliefs. Your file says vat you are a Christian. Do you believe vat you rose from the dead? Vat your Jesus Christ? Vot is it wit you?" And if our man here remembered he'd say no he wasn't Jesus Christ, but he was just as cool. The shrink disgusted dismisses him, scribbles something about delusions, observations, recommendations and treatment. Assures the family there's nothing to worry about. A few weeks in the hospital and "he ve good as new. Sign here, a few shock treatments, a little chemical therapy, alot of rest, vack to work in a month. No more dis talk of magic and magicians in trees. Sign here." The family signs. The shrink takes him away, jams more pills down his throat and wires up his ass, turns on the juice and burns it out. In a month, the electricity the only reality, the shrink explains it all to him again. This time it's all reasonable, "re-adjusted" he thanks the shrink as the shrink shakes his hand and the hospital receptionist shakes down the family.

PEEKER (*surrendering*). I was only hoping, I guess, for the magic to live.

KAKAZBAL. Like I've been saying, face it, magic's dead, magicians are dead, we're an endangered species.

PEEKER (*excited*). Hey, why don't we teach it, tell the people about it! Save magic, save magicians. Get our asses out of this tree, show the world!

KAKAZBAL. It can't be done. You know each one of them has to learn themselves, usually when they're dying. We can't teach it, it's all a myster, even to us. We just know it exists.

PEEKER (*still excited*). We can teach mystery. Others do. Religions do. Science explores mysteries. There are other mysteries being taught. We could get people interested.

KAKAZBAL. What they call mysteries, fool, are simply gaps in their framework. Religion, science whatever. They build a conceptual framework and wherever they find a gap they call that a mystery with the implication that all eventually will be revealed. Like they're entitled. Anything outside of their framework they don't ever recognize. If they witness magic they force it into their framework calling it a miracle but if it doesn't fit then it obviously wasn't a miracle. It wasn't magic. It wasn't anything.

PEEKER. But in the past magic and magicians thrived. The world was full of it.

KAKAZBAL. That was before the strongest and stupidest forced their explanations on the others. Now they're dependent on reasons. We can't give them reasons. Becoming a magician is drifting through life free of explanations, without expectations, seeing things your way. But people don't like that. They want goddammit to know what to expect and why, they need to know exactly where they're going and how long it will take.

PEEKER. We can't tell them that.

KAKAZBAL. No shit! To get any followers we'd have to make them pay. Advertise on T.V. On matchbook covers. Learn magic in your spare time. Begin to witness inexplicable wonders in six weeks. Your power and your perception increased or half your money back. Amaze your friends. See you future and live in your past. Certificate granted and placement available if requested upon completion. Approved for veteran benefits. Call or mail the coupon today. Out of towners call collect.

PEEKER. So what do we do?

KAKAZBAL. Start the world again, he's dead.

The policeman and the crowd, the sounds of the city comes to "life"—the siren of the ambulance wails in the background. There is a pause.

PEEKER. I wonder where he's at now?

KAKAZBAL. Take a look—

Peeker closes his eyes.

PEEKER. (*opens his eyes and smiles*). He's at the beach, like a child, delirious with joy in the sun listening to a shell tell him about the sea.

KAKAZBAL. He remembered what the shell said as he was dying.

The ambulance arrives. The attendants jump out put the body on a stretcher, begin mouth to mouth respiration, pound on the body's chest, throw him inside and drive off. The siren fades away.

COP I. I want you people to come over by the squad, we need statements.

They exit.

PEEKER. What now Kakazbal?

KAKAZBAL. Nothing. We eat. Take a walk. Do what they do. I don't know. Wait.

PEEKER. Wait for what?

KAKAZBAL. Wait for omens. Work our magic. Listen to the wind. Just wait, just see. That's all we can do. We can't live with their explanations, and their explanations can't live with us. Let's go.

PEEKER. Kakazbal?

KAKAZBAL. What?

PEEKER. Why do we sit in trees?

KAKAZBAL. Because we're magicians, fool!

The curtain falls as they vanish.



JOHN NIEMANN

FOR CONRAD; (who is not here)

CONRAD.
MYSTERIOUS BLACK MAN OF INFLUENCE.
WHERE ARE YOU NOW?
IN WHICH HEAVEN?
DID DEATH TAKE YOUR SOUL AWAY,
BECAUSE YOU HAD SOMETHING
TO SAY?
CONRAD K. RIVERS
I REMEMBER YOU!
AND ALL FOR ME YOU VOWED TO DO.
FEW MEN ARE MURDERED WITHOUT REASON.
SO WHY ARE YOU DEAD?
CONRAD.

DEMETRIS HARRIS

Whole in the Pocket
of My Head

if the truth were
in my pocket
't would be an easy thing
to find it there

for my mother
used to turn
my pockets
inside-out
before she did the wash

but the truth
is in my head—
and my mother doesn't launder anymore

O.C. UPANTI

CHECK ONE:

MARITAL STATUS.

how can I describe myself,
for I have never been engaged
or married
never divorced
or widowed
and with you, I'm not single

BARBARA LONG

WAITING FOR THE 9:25

ROOSEVELT STATION, Chicago

*That yellowed piece of newspaper
Echoes my emptiness
Across this deserted platform.
I am more alone that I dare admit.*

*This moon, these stars
Measure distances of darkness.
It is cold.
This city stands winter-still.
Silence everywhere.*

*I know the ceremony of loneliness.
Its stealing light shadows my loss
And carries me nowhere.*

GARY CZERWINSKI



THREE HOURS OF NEBRASKA
IN A BUCKET SEAT

awaiting the sunrise
and the wheels roll on
watching the terrain
develop the rocky mountains
half an hour
canvass heat
and camper flies
before the sky
added a nimbus wind
and the wheels roll on
franchise soil
rawlins koa
sunset to midnight
and the wheels roll on
salt lake city
coming out of the mountains
and the night
through nevada cirrus
winding down to mono lake
headlights into yosemite
lodging in a sleeping bag

WITH ONLY THE MORNING
TO WAKE ME

— — —

KENNAN ZISHKA



JOHN NIEMANN

MAMA EARTH

SCRAMBLED MIND,
FIGHTING TIME.
CHOKING ON CIGARS
IN SMOKED FILLED BARS.

SLIPPERY BANANA EARTH
UNWED MOTHER OF MY BIRTH
TAKE ME UPON YOUR BREAST.
CREATE VISIONS OF HAPPINESS.

FEED MY SOUL,
WITH A STORY UNTOLD.
'BOUT THE BLACK CARGO CREW
THAT SLAVED FOR U.

MAMA SWEET MAMA
SWEET MAMA EARTH.

LOOKN' 'ROUND
ALL OVER TOWN.
FOR YOUR CHILDREN
THAT CAN'T BE FOUND.

LISTEN TO THE CRY
THE ONE THATS THE SAME.
FROM ALL THE ANGRY PEOPLE,
THAT CURSE YOUR MIGHTY NAME.

MAMA SWEET MAMA
SWEET SWEET MAMA
SWEET MAMA EARTH.

DEMETRIS HARRIS

THE HOLLOW BEING

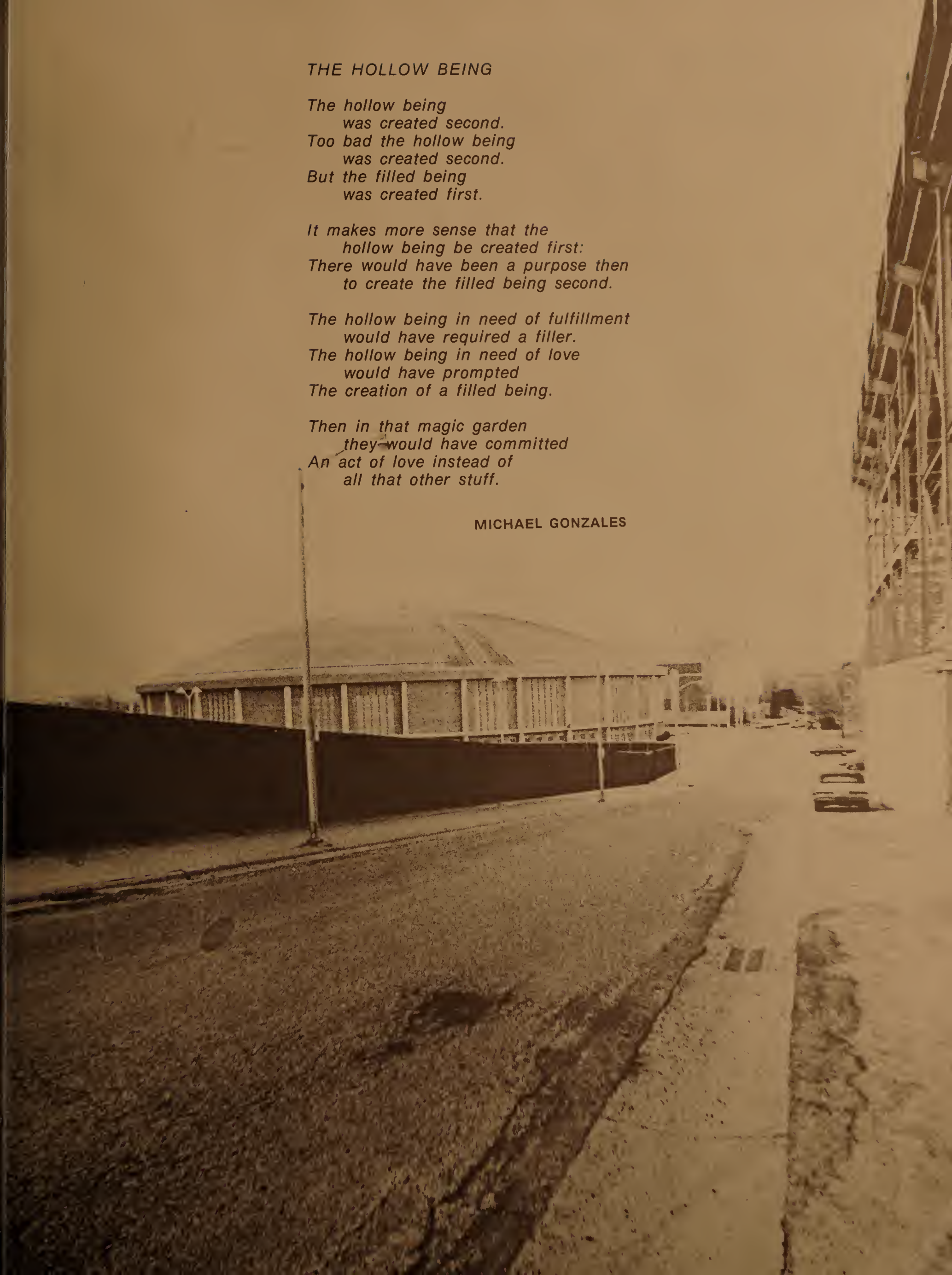
*The hollow being
was created second.
Too bad the hollow being
was created second.
But the filled being
was created first.*

*It makes more sense that the
hollow being be created first:
There would have been a purpose then
to create the filled being second.*

*The hollow being in need of fulfillment
would have required a filler.
The hollow being in need of love
would have prompted
The creation of a filled being.*

*Then in that magic garden
they would have committed
An act of love instead of
all that other stuff.*

MICHAEL GONZALES



PLEA FOR PROGENY IN JEOPARDY

(The great sculptor, Michelangelo, angrily struck his nearly perfect statue of Moses when it did not answer his command to speak. The flaw on the right knee is still visible.)

Mercy, God, they know
not, nor do I
What Who Why
offend Thee.

Stop Halt
Slow Stay
Them lest
They, headstrong, or we
in seeking sheer sublimity
spurn Life's near facsimile
and like M. Buonarroti
flaw its knee

irremedially.

LOUISE EGNATZ

DIVORCE

Two different persons, two
separate minds, but, yet, one
impregnable emotion, bonding them
to each other. Two people in
complete harmony, but totally
incongruent. A ceaseless struggle
entangles their relationship, marring
their happiness and ruining
their lives. They try, but
can never succeed, only
failure is wrought. One
must cease, so that two
may survive.

RICK OLIVER



you can't saddle a dead indian
to a lame horse

*crazy horse was an indian—
they shot him—
(which merely proves my point)
they'd shoot you too
given half a chance—
it's not so much the feather
as the way you dance*

O.C. UPANTI

HERCULES MEETS CHICAGO

Elton flashed
in feathers
a parrot would have envied.

but,
the show was in the audience.

glitter & shine
sparkle & glitz

the crowd struck
thousands of matches,
a tiny light shone,
20,000 times bright,
protected by the glow of light.

what they said was: love

Elton John accepted,
and sang again,
flashing glitz at every
pie-eyed match-holder,
and there was mutual shiny love.

LINDA LUTTRINGER



MARTYNA BELLESSIS



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